

Minutes\*

**Senate Committee on Educational Policy  
Valentine's Day, 2001  
1:00 – 3:00  
238A Morrill Hall**

Present: Wilbert Ahern (chair), Shawn Curley, Steve Fitzgerald, Gordon Hirsch, Frank Kulacki, Geri Malandra, (George Green for) Christine Maziar, Carol Miller, Kathleen Newell, Marsha Odom, Mary Ellen Shaw, Thomas Soulen, Steven Sperber, Craig Swan

Regrets: Prince Amattoey, Emily Hoover, Karen Seashore, Rita Snider, Rachel Sullivan

Absent: Khaled Dajani

Guests: Professor Billie Wahlstrom (chair, Task Force on Distributed Education); Professor Denise Guerin (chair, Classroom Advisory Subcommittee)

[In these minutes: (1) report from the Task Force on Distributed Education; (2) report from the Classroom Advisory Subcommittee]

**1. Interim Report from the Task Force on Distributed Education**

Professor Ahern convened the meeting at 1:05 and welcomed Chris Frazier, a new student member of the Committee, a doctoral student in the College of Education and Human Development. He then turned to Professor Wahlstrom for an interim report from the Task Force on Distributed Education (TFDE).

Professor Wahlstrom distributed copies of slides and said her report is on what the TFDE is thinking about. She received a list of questions from the Committee and also has a list of questions for it, copies of which she also distributed.

Distributed learning includes both technology-enhanced learning (TEL) and Distance Learning (DL) and is a core part of the University's mission. The goal of distributed learning is "the strategic use of technology in support of our land grant mission and University's place among the top research universities in the country." In terms of the University's slow start in establishing a comprehensive plan, it has only been slow in a relative sense. The University is one of the comprehensive and complex institutions in the country; those schools that have comprehensive plans are small, nimble, and do not have a lot invested in their plans—so if they make a mistake, they can change course. Some of the larger institutions in the country, similar to Minnesota, are now also developing plans, and the TFDE has the responsibility to develop a comprehensive plan for the University.

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The task force has four working groups (on developing a vision, content, delivery, and technology infrastructure); the convenor of the last one has already left the University for a better job, which typifies the problem the University has in retaining people in high-technology positions. Each of these groups has prepared preliminary reports and they are now looking to see what might have fallen between the cracks (e.g., student services).

Professor Wahlstrom told a story about Wayne Gretsky. Asked why he was so much better than other players, Gretsky said he "didn't skate to where the puck was but where the puck would be." That is a good metaphor for distributed education, she said: the University needs to skate to where distributed education will be and it is not clear where it is now.

There are three guiding concepts for the TFDE, Professor Wahlstrom told the Committee, but she said they are a draft and she welcomed "robust interaction" about them. First is increasing convenience for learners, such as a single system to handle credit and non-credit registrations. Right now the University cannot track non-credit registrations and do like Amazon.com in providing information on related topics in which a learner might be interested.

The second concept is enhancing learning quality. There is a wide variety of technology and content.

The third concept is increasing learning productivity. There must be a measurable return for students AND the institution. The University is putting a lot of money into technology but is not measuring the return on the investment, which might include student learning, more tuition revenue because there are more students, or more income because of the development of new tools.

"Reaching the puck" requires a number of things. There must be support from the top for the plan, which Professor Wahlstrom said she believes there is.

The classroom must be redefined; it must not be thought of as only a room with four walls but rather much more. Churchill said that we shape buildings and then buildings shape us; there needs to be a new idea of the school house. Students waiting in a hallway can watch a streaming video lecture. This, in turn, raises questions such as whether putting material on the web will violate copyright laws; in a classroom with four walls, an instructor can use materials and not run that risk, but there could be a problem if material is on the web. But if the University says a classroom can be anywhere students and teachers meet to learn, then they may be protected (with a password).

Content must be mobile. The academic calendar is based on the agricultural schedule and class times are based on an industrial model. The University must figure out how to make content mobile (e.g., one can take a nurse midwifery program entirely on line and take practica in the local area—the University goes out to those students).

The University must graduate its students in four years and keep them for forty years. It must get involved with them before they matriculate, serve them as students, and then continue to reach them as alumni; it needs to keep track of everyone. The University of Washington gives an ID number to everyone who registers for a class and then gives them more information and has a rising number of students such that in the near future one-half the people on the West Coast will be University of Washington students.

The University needs to form strategic partnerships with the private sector and it must support faculty and students.

Research has broken classes into four types: traditional face-to-face instruction, mediated instruction (a reduction in face-to-face interaction and some use of technology), technology-enhanced, and web-based. Longitudinal research (over the last five years) suggests that the latter three kinds of classes take a lot more time to put together and to administer. On the other side, the research also shows there is a lot more interaction between student and instructor, quality is rated higher by students, faculty satisfaction is about 80%, and when asked, 82% of faculty say they would offer such courses again. These courses take more time but both faculty and students like them better than traditional classroom instruction. If such classes are to be supported, one must recognize they are more time-consuming but also more satisfactory.

The challenges and opportunities are several, Professor Wahlstrom said. Accountability and assessment need to be strengthened; right now there are no benchmarks. There needs to be significant research in distributed education on classroom issues. There are faculty governance and policy issues. The University must manage risk: both for going into distributed education as well as what happens if it does NOT (e.g., the potential to lose significant tuition revenues). The University must decide on an e-commerce strategy; her model is that people who create content, intellectual property, should share in the benefits.

As the classroom manager, Mr. Fitzgerald commented, his focus is on the problem of faculty who have completed multi-media training but who then do not have classrooms in which to make use of their training. There is strong support for faculty in some areas (e.g., training) but there is a gap between the training and the provision of technology infrastructure in the classroom so they can make use of it.

Professor Wahlstrom agreed. She said the University is in transition between those who early on adopted technology in their instruction and those who are now moving to use it (in part because they are often being pushed to do so by students). Some jumped in feet first, Professor Ahern observed, and developed wonderful courses; others want to begin using technology incrementally and need help. The second group needs better support.

Professor Wahlstrom reported that the University of Texas at Austin **REQUIRES** all adjunct faculty to take a course in technology before they can have a contract to teach. They do not try to make the regular faculty do so but the materials they have developed for training adjunct faculty are also available to the regular faculty. She said that she would like to see such a requirement adopted for all graduate students in the sciences (she leaves open the question of whether it would be advisable to do so in the humanities) so that those students learn to use instructional technology; it would help faculty a great deal to have TAs trained.

What is most scary in the Governor's budget recommendation, Mr. Fitzgerald commented, is that the University will be seeing students, in the next 5-8 years, who have benefited from the huge investment in technology in the K-12 schools and who will have high (or even higher) expectations when they arrive at the University. The University needs a lead time of 4-5 years to provide the

needed classroom technology and it is dismaying that the Governor is not supporting this necessary investment in the University's future.

The cost per unit of technology is dropping and should not be an issue, Professor Kulacki said. the issue of faculty assistance is the expensive part. Faculty turn over at roughly 5% per year--but the delivery of instruction cannot wait 20 years; THAT is the frightening part of the budget proposal. The technology cost, when the means of delivery is settled, will be low from the student's end. Mr. Fitzgerald agreed, but at the same time the faculty will say they are not going to invest a lot of their time being trained in technology when the University does not have the infrastructure support to let them make use of the training.

There also needs to be support for students, Professor Ahern said. There will be more and more computers in elementary schools in the next decade; some students will come as whizzes but some will still be nearly computer-illiterate. Some will not be able to use WebCT courses; what is available for them? There is already a toolkit with everything a student needs, Professor Wahlstrom replied, including a disk, software, information, a 24-hour hotline, and troubleshooting help--the University has done well in that respect. There is, however, still work to be done in terms of one-stop shopping for students. And what the University does not have is a disk that can be mailed to anyone interested in taking an on-line course with information about what to do and what to expect. That needs to be looked at.

Professor Odom asked about the learning workshop model described by Bernie Gifford to the Committee last spring, in which learning packets or modules are developed for faculty to use. The Crookston faculty have had a lot of training in on-line instruction but some do not have the time to develop an entire course. What about access to modules that they might use? Professor Wahlstrom said she hoped the University would have such modules; there is no central access point for all the tools that have been designed that faculty might want to use. The University is SO distributed that no one knows what everyone has.

Professor Wahlstrom referred to a question on her handout; she said the faculty governance issues are critical. For example, what percentage of courses will students be "allowed" (if that is the right word, she said) to take on-line rather than in face-to-face settings? Another question, Professor Ahern said, is who authorizes on-line courses--who must give permission to offer them? Who decides, indeed, Professor Wahlstrom agreed; right now a faculty member decides if a course is to be lecture rather than discussion, for instance.

Dr. Green suggested the department would decide, in part in order to protect enrollment and the balance of courses--but a faculty member who wanted to offer the same course in class and on-line would have a great deal of leeway. There is a range of department cultures, Professor Wahlstrom observed; some would say offering a course on the web would be fine while others would say that faculty member is not meeting class responsibilities. What about substituting some mediated instruction, Professor Ahern asked? Professor Wahlstrom agreed--can the faculty decide that on their own?

A number of Committee members said that in their departments these decisions would come to a curriculum committee or in some other way be discussed by the department. They said they

would not feel free to decide by themselves to offer a course on the web. There is nothing intrinsic in the question, Professor Sperber said; it is simply a matter of different department cultures.

Is there not a policy on contact hours, Professor Odom inquired? What is contact, Professor Wahlstrom responded? The bottom line on the existing policy, Dr. Swan said, is about the amount of academic work required in relation to the number of credits for a course. What about a course that had two hours of instruction and the rest mediated through technology, Professor Ahern asked? Some would say that a faculty member is just goofing off if a course were offered that way!

There are workload issues at the college and university level, Professor Miller commented, and it may need to be redefined. There are questions about multiple-section courses and about whether one is comparing apples to oranges in terms of delivery; these will need to be fought out. Professor Ahern agreed with the point about workload. It may seem like a faculty member is working less if a course is on-line and it is necessary to be clear that faculty must spend MORE time managing such a course, not less. Moreover, Professor Miller added, one is never out of class when it is offered on-line.

Professor Miller pointed out also that among some faculty there is a deep distrust of on-line materials. Faculty culture comes into play and there will be a need to defuse anxieties about mediated courses. One carrot is increased enrollment.

Professor Kulacki reported that the University of Illinois has put a lot of money into on-line engineering courses, with mixed results. There is a vision of the 24-hour class, with mediated instruction, but they did not work as well as expected because there is a need for good recitation sections. That could be mediated as well, Dr. Green suggested; Professor Kulacki said they thought it could ALL be mediated but doing it that way did not produce the quality that was sought.

Could the task force talk about principles about where mediated or on-line learning might make more sense and where it might make less, Dr. Swan inquired? No one has suggested that ALL courses should be mediated or on-line. One could let faculty interest drive the decision or the University could make particular choices about classes and programs. Professor Wahlstrom said she believed the University must make choices and decide on areas that would be offered on-line.

What about cases where a faculty member wants to teach a course on-line and the department says "no," Professor Wahlstrom asked? To meet the Governor's recommendation on certificate programs, a department might say a course MUST be offered on-line; can it tell faculty members they must offer it on-line? The culture in most units is that faculty are not made to teach what they do not want to teach, Dr. Green said; some may draw short straws if there is a course that must be offered. If a course is imposed by the market rather than the demands of the curriculum, however, it is more likely to be farmed out to adjunct instruction.

What if the department supports the course/program and says there is a market for it? Can the faculty be made to offer the course, Professor Wahlstrom asked? How is that different from what happens now, Professor Miller responded? Faculty can be persuaded or required to teach a course now. The more the unit sees a course as part of its mission, Dr. Green said, the more the faculty will buy in; the less they see it that way, the more likely it will be taught by an adjunct faculty member. This happens with survey courses sometimes, he added; no one wants to teach them so the department

twists arms. If that doesn't work, it will go outside. Dr. Swan commented that if he were the dean of the college and saw that happening he would have a talk with the department!

It appears from the comments, Professor Ahern summarized, that if a course is to be shifted from a traditional format to on-line, there must be collective approval by the department. If a mediated instruction course is already offered, it must be taught that way. If a department decided a course should be mediated or on-line, then it must be taught that way.

There was discussion of UNITE in IT. Professor Kulacki explained the reasons that UNITE was not a good comparison with distance education.

Professor Newell inquired if the task force had looked at the professional socialization of students. Some have, Professor Wahlstrom said. For a research university, one of the major things it does is introduce people to the life and work of the institution and get them used to the work of the profession. One does not have to do that with all students. The evidence available suggests that that professionalization can be accomplished through on-line education.

The task force will need to address the issues of support for faculty (who will not buy in to distributed education without the support) and a conviction that distributed education does not address student learning as well as traditional delivery. Professor Wahlstrom agreed; the evidence must be presented that distributed education leads to a better job of teaching and learning.

Another question Professor Wahlstrom said she wanted to focus on is whether the University should develop a policy for licensing faculty TEL and on-line materials so that the faculty retain control of them. Relatedly, how should conflict of commitment issues be handled? Is it acceptable for a faculty member to offer a course at the University on MWF and to offer the same course to another institution on the weekend?

Professor Sperber said a policy is needed. The University has a liberal consulting policy, Professor Wahlstrom pointed out (it provides one day per week, expected to be in the faculty member's area of expertise). Professor Ahern said there needs to be caution exercised with respect to licensing, recalling the example of an institution that took a course developed by a faculty member and offered it without her consent. Faculty may not want to see the same content offered in a course four years later--and would not teach it that way. Perhaps delivery could be licensed, but not content.

Her idea, Professor Wahlstrom said, is that a basic math course, for example, might be licensed and then taught by someone else, with payment of royalties to the faculty member who developed it, just as would be the case with a textbook. Dr. Green agreed that a license would not be a problem if it is not coercive and if the faculty member has options and can set conditions on use.

Professor Wahlstrom said she has spoken with the deans and chancellors; about 10 faculty have a contract with the same publisher--and some did better than others. If the University had negotiated the contract, ALL would have done better. The TFDL is exploring whether University negotiation of contracts for faculty would work. Professor Miller said that these issues are so complicated that it would help faculty to have legal support from the University--and not just on contracts but also on how to put materials on-line and their proper use.

There are departments that have deals with Amazon.com, Professor Wahlstrom commented, so that when students purchase books through Amazon, money goes to the department. It would be helpful if the University could negotiate license agreements that would allow the faculty to consult, through the University, on intellectual property and be given some of the benefits. That, Professor Swan said, could be a hard sell at the legislature. There would need to be some clear definitions established.

With respect to conflict of commitment, Professor Ahern said it could be addressed with a consulting agreement that sets limits. Conflict of commitment would be ended if the faculty member works through the University, where the University acts as the broker and sees that the faculty member receives a fair return, Professor Wahlstrom observed. She agreed that the consulting policy does not seem to set appropriate bounds on faculty members going to external vendors but pointed out that an effort to draft a conflict of commitment policy failed a few years ago.

A partnership with major publishing houses should be considered, Professor Kulacki said. They are as concerned as the University; if Napster can run music companies out of business, distributed education could run publishers out of business. Partnerships with private vendors would be a different ball game and there would be faculty contract issues. Right now faculty negotiate individually with publishers.

There is much emphasis on mechanisms, Professor Ahern observed. It will be a hard sell to convince people that mediated instruction can replace personal interaction in core liberal arts education, he said. It is appropriate for the task force to address that issue. Professor Wahlstrom smiled and said she would try to wean people over.

Professor Ahern thanked Professor Wahlstrom.

## **2. Report from the Classroom Advisory Subcommittee**

Professor Ahern turned next to Professor Denise Guerin for a report from the Classroom Advisory Subcommittee (hereinafter CAS). He noted that this is partly an ASSEMBLY committee matter, because the Subcommittee charge is limited to the Twin Cities, but said that it is also a SENATE issue because of the premise that students at the University should experience the same quality of classroom settings. Different campuses will approach the problem differently but it is a University responsibility to see that they are coordinated. It is helpful to have a report on the Twin Cities and a similar report should be forthcoming from the Crookston and Morris campuses.

Professor Guerin thanked the Committee for providing her time for a report. She noted that the CAS is new this year and has been developing an agenda as well as studying and supporting Twin Cities classroom issues. There have been many reports on classroom conditions, she noted; CAS did not have to define the problem.

Several issues have been brought to their attention. First, the technology upgrade plan for classrooms must move forward at an accelerated pace and needs to have recurring funding identified for it. Second, the classroom physical plant--furnishings, fixtures, equipment--and maintenance levels are not appropriate. Third, scheduling is a problem.

Today she wished only to talk about the technology upgrade plan, Professor Guerin said. CAS has developed a statement for which it has sought (and received) endorsement from various groups on campus. The statement reads:

There are critical unmet needs in University classrooms. The Twin Cities General Purpose Classroom Technology Upgrade Plan is a comprehensive multi-year plan that addresses essential teaching and learning requirements in classrooms. Implementation of this Plan to date has made a significant difference in meeting the needs of faculty and the expectations of students. Therefore, the Plan must be accelerated to provide a strong classroom environment that will put University of Minnesota teaching and learning at a level required at a premier institution. To do this, priority must be given to increased and recurring funding for the Plan.

CAS is not proposing whence the funding should come but is arguing that classrooms should be a high priority on the campus. CAS will also do a brief report for the Provost with data on faculty issues. She said CAS would also like the support of SCEP for the statement.

Mr. Fitzgerald recalled that the Committee had approved the classroom technology upgrade plan and sent it to the Campus Assembly; it was also endorsed by the Senate Committee on Information Technology and the Senate Committee on Finance and Planning, college groups, and the regents were provided a briefing on it. One force acting on him now is faculty who are now excited to do multi-media instruction and who want classrooms (that he does not have). That pressure did lead to progress and they got a good start, but the steps taken forward will now slow because they do not have recurring funds to make improvements and maintain classrooms.

While strides have been made, the plan is underfunded. The plan calls for installing the Technology Upgrade in 30 classrooms in 2000, 44 in 2001, 56 in 2002, and 50 each in 2003 and 2004. Using one-time funding, Classroom Management reached the goal in 2000 but has funds to do only 20 of the planned 44 classrooms in 2001. There are recurring funds in the biennial request for classroom improvements (in the part of the request that the Governor did not support). The deans have indicated they believe that progress is too slow and that the University must move faster. Those who are pressing most strongly are the deans of IT and CLA.

There are two issues, Mr. Fitzgerald said: one, the classroom technology upgrade schedule and funds to meet it, and two, recurring funds for lifecycle costs, maintenance, and faculty support (e.g., a hotline to call if there are problems--they do NOT want simply to put equipment in classrooms and abandon faculty to its use). This Committee has endorsed the classroom technology upgrade plan before; the resolution from the CAS is to ensure that the faculty voice is registered on the issue. He said he feels vulnerable because the Governor is not supporting any funding increase but there is great pressure from faculty and students with increasing expectations. He pointed out that in this past Fall Semester alone \$60 million tuition income was generated in general purpose classrooms. The University depends on its classroom environment to support its teaching and learning mission, and part of attracting top faculty is being sure that the University has a top teaching environment.

Professor Ahern suggested that Professor Hirsch preside over this part of the meeting, as the Assembly Committee, and then SCEP could also make a statement endorsing a University-wide effort to obtain the needed funds. Dr. Swan noted that Mr. Fitzgerald's report to the Twin Cities deans was also provided to the coordinate campus chancellors and that the biennial request funds are for all



campuses. All share the concern about the "catch is as catch can" funding for classrooms and all agree that classroom technology has a finite and short life.

Professor Hirsch asked if there were questions. The Committee discussed what would happen if the program was provided only half the funding requested and what the odds are that the state will provide ANY of the funds. Any reduction in the funding would of necessity stretch out the time over which classrooms would be upgraded.

Mr. Fitzgerald said it was difficult to know if classroom upgrades would receive half the requested funding if the University received half of its biennial request. There was comment that with the cost of compensation, health care increases, and utilities, it was unlikely funds would be available if the University receives only one-half of what it requested. Mr. Fitzgerald commented that under IMG, general purpose classrooms generate revenue but there is no mechanism to capture any part of that revenue for investment in the classrooms. This statement from ACEP and other groups stressing the importance of classroom funding will be important, he said, if the University does not receive all the money it requested.

Professor Miller said this was an "apple pie" resolution and suggested additional wording to be used with it in the future. Professor Guerin accepted the suggestion and agreed with Mr. Fitzgerald that if the University did not receive the funds it requested then the endorsement becomes even more important.

Dr. Green said that support for the statement will evaporate if it is juxtaposed with funds for salary increases--and it is in those competing priorities that hard decisions will have to be made. Pieties are OK, he said, but they may not hold up when put against other priorities. He would vote for the statement--but not over ten other things that may also be important. Mr. Fitzgerald said the statement was important as articulation of a faculty point of view but he agreed that posing classroom needs against salaries would mean the classroom needs would lose--but he said the University should not allow classroom needs to be put in that position. Classrooms are vital resources that go directly to the heart of our teaching and learning mission, he continued. Classroom funding is a valid requirement that stands on its on merits, and the requirement is not lessened by other valid funding needs.

Mr. Fitzgerald also said that the University has not made the transition to a mindset that teaching-based resources require funds, care, and attention. There must be programmed maintenance and upgrades. It is important the faculty voice be heard; faculty must say that this is not a satisfactory environment in which to teach.

This will be addressed to the administration, Professor Hirsch asked? It will. It is saying classroom technology is important and the need for recurring funds must be recognized? It is. As for where funds should come from (e.g., from tuition revenue), Professor Guerin said, that is beyond the purview of the subcommittee to advise upon. As a high priority for faculty and students, the administration is being asked to take action.

Professor Kulacki said the administration could ask deans Davis and Rosenstone in IT and CLA to fund the improvements through the colleges. This is related to the budget task force recommendations about common goods, Mr. Fitzgerald said. The funding of classrooms is highlighted as a problem under IMG.

After deliberating whether to send the statement to the Twin Cities Campus Assembly for action (the Committee decided not to do so at this time), it voted unanimously to approve it and that the subcommittee should forward it to the administration.

Professor Ahern then moved the following parallel statement for SCEP:

The Senate Committee on Educational Policy endorses the Twin Cities General Purpose Classroom Technology Upgrade Plan as part of a coordinated effort of the campuses of the University to provide a strong classroom environment that will put University of Minnesota teaching and learning at a level required at a premier institution. To do this, priority must be given to increased and recurring funding for the Plan.

The motion was unanimously approved.

Professor Ahern adjourned the meeting at 3:00.

-- Gary Engstrand

University of Minnesota